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EDITORIAL

IT is the day after Christmas. All the suspense that children feel, the excitement of preparation, lights and ribbons and bells — everything is over. Where did Christmas go and what is there that survives? Or is it all of a parcel, to be folded and boxed and put back in the attic for another year? Something, of course, does survive when all the hurry and confusion gives way to that glad weariness that comes on Christmas Eve when the last stocking is filled, and Christmas morning dawns. For a night and a day the world is touched by magic and becomes what it might be all through the year.

It is that knowledge that comes to us when we have really kept Christmas of what life *ought* to be and in its best moments truly *is*. It is generosity drawing a larger circle, good will overlooking all the usual irritations, anticipation that leads us home to childhood's magic world for a day, the power to believe that somewhere angels' songs are being sung if only we had ears to hear their song, and God draws close to touch this world of humankind. Wordsworth gives us the phrase we need: it is "emotion recollected in tranquility."

I don't know of any better example of "emotion recollected in tranquility" than that remarkable book of Jan Struther's, *Mrs. Miniver*. It is Christmas morning. Still dark, Toby, the youngest, with stocking in hand, has curled up on the foot of Mrs. Miniver's bed, and Vin and Judy follow. Vin, the oldest, grunts his approval as he examines each object from his stocking. Judy turns everthing out in a pile, and with a quick glance finds her favorite object. But Toby has all his treasures neatly arranged on the comforter. Without hurrying he finally makes his choice—the large glass marble with the colored squirls inside. The special marble is put carefully to one side. Toby plays with the other things, but he always comes back to the glass marble, even if only with a watchful glance.

> "Mrs. Miniver watched him with a mixture of delight and misgiving. It was her own favorite approach to life; but the trouble was that sometimes the marble rolled away."

The traditional chronology of the parts of the Christmas story place the coming of the Magi sometime after the birth night. For them there was no marvelous midnight visitation of heavenly messengers, no song announcing the wondrous event; there was only the darkness of night and a star that brought them across the desert stretches to Bethlehem. The Wise Men following their star becomes as good a symbol as we are likely to come upon for the "day after Christmas." The holiday season soon passes, the festival is over, and we are caught up in the demands of the common duties of a work-a-day world. What a lot of darkness and confusion there is to be encountered out there! We need a symbol that will cast its spell of recollection. Then we can be reminded of that quality of life that gives Christmas a kind of warm and gentle glow. Our thoughts go out to others; the ties of friendship are renewed; we light a candle here, put a bit of sparkle there, and build a little kingdom of brotherhood and affection. All these are ways of admitting the fact that our lives are enriched and sustained by others. If we forget to tend to little things that matter so much in the year ahead, between yesterday and next Christmas, we take the chance that Toby took when he left the big glass marble 'til last for, as Mrs. Miniver knew, the glass marbles of life do sometimes roll away.

The Prologue to John's gospel sets the mood both of Advent and of Christmas: "The light shines in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." On the day after Christmas we feel some of that "emotion recollected in tran-

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Christmas Memory and Hope

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Christmas is a meeting place. Not only is it a time when families reunite; the whole meaning of Christmas is to be found in a meeting together of many different customs and ideas and emotions. Memory and hope meet together at Christmas. At this season we remember, for we cannot help remembering, and we look forward too, for while we are alive we are all warmed by the hopes hidden within us. Memory and hope is the mood of Christmastide.

I was born during the slump, the Great Depression of the thirties, and times were hard, though I was scarcely conscious of this as a child. We kept our Christmas then, but not in so lavish a fashion as we are fortunately able to do today. And then as I became more aware of the world came the war, and times were tragic and tense as even children could feel occasionally as they were marched out of school into the air-raid shelters to the sound of sirens, and the bombs fell. We still kept our Christmas then, and everyone remembers what times of hope those Christmases were. Certainly we were a people that walked in darkness—though I doubt whether Isaiah foresaw the blackout—and how we longed for the coming of the light. "When the lights go on again in London town"—didn't we sing something like that? Christmas meant a great deal then though things to eat and buy were so scarce that it is amazing to think back to the time of one egg a week. Oranges were then the treasures of the East, and the banana was as unfamiliar and strange to us as frankincense and myrrh—if one chanced to come our way we gazed on it with reverential awe, almost afraid to eat. Black were the nights of the blackout, but that made us appreciate the stars all the more, and we thought we understood what it might be to follow the light of a star.

> Three kings from Persian lands afar
> To Jordan follow the pointing star;
> And this the quest of the travellers three,
> Where the new-born King of the Jews
> may be,
> Full royal gifts they bear for the king—
> Gold, incense, myrrh are their offering.

Children do not think of Christmas as something specially religious—and in this they may have got hold of something important. We mixed everything up: stars and Father Christmas, reindeer and angels, snowmen and shepherds. Our greatest excitement was that Father Christmas was coming—rather clever of him to manage so well in the blackout—and his mysterious presents always turned up. We didn't think about the meaning of Christmas; we just felt it. For the ordinary world was briefly touched and transfigured. It was magical, wonderful. We knew there were divine things more wonderful than words can tell. I went to school to a huge gaunt elementary school looking like a prison. It was built in 1830 by Thomas Ashton, a wealthy Unitarian mill-owner, and like a good Unitarian he built it to last, so it still stands, and it is still a school. Its sombre brown and beige walls (how blissfully unconcerned we were about decor in those days!) were mysteriously transformed into caves of enchantment and beauty with streamers and stars, tinsel and trees and dangling, glittering ornaments; it was the magic of Christmas.

Christmas is a meeting-place, and in a way Christmas is a marriage—a marriage of the Pagan and the Christian, of the good things, the human, boisterous, earthy enjoyments of this world with that which challenges and transforms the world. The festival we now celebrate as Christmas was old and dearly loved long before Christians adopted it as the time to celebrate the birthday of Jesus. So Christmas has two messages about the light that shines in darkness: the ancient message that man has always known, and the Christian message brought by the coming of Jesus. At the time of the darkest and shortest days of the year men and women paused to cheer themselves. They walked in darkness and yet they knew that the promise of the light would not fail, for the days of light and the sun's warmth would return to gladden the face of the earth. They knew that beneath the bleak earth's surface the seed lay waiting to appear in its power and bring new life into the

world. That is a profound message and it is still part of the message of Christmas today.

Wedded to this there is the Christian message of Christmas. We celebrate in the coming of Jesus the advent of a great light-bringer. People who walked in darkness have seen a great light in his teaching and his life. He is a light shining in the darkness, and the light does not exist for itself but for the sake of others. It points not to itself, but illuminates the way, lights for us a way through the darkling plain of this world, swept as it is with confused alarms of struggle and flight. The light helps us to see, to see ourselves, others, and the way more clearly, truly than we could manage in the darkness.

What shall we make of the traditional stories and pictures? We feel their power and enchantment, but we know they are not history, for they were born out of the human imagination and can only be imaginatively appreciated. Behind Christmas there lies a little cold history which has been warmed by a rich covering of eager human aspiration and imagination. The lovely pictures of the Mother and Child, of the Adoration of shepherds, wise men and angels come from the imagination, not from history. History will probably show us something much more like a refugee mother of the Palestine, Europe, or Africa of today. A picture of ugly poverty and wretchedness that is only made bearable by the presence of love. Our Christmas stories and pictures arose out of some urgent profound desire to show the harsh mud and mire of Earth transcended. At the birth of the Prince of Peace, so men thought, there must have been harmony and splendour and joyful surprise. Mother and child represent the completest fulfilment, and Christmas, which makes of them the centre of the universe, never fails to tell its tidings of comfort and joy, its promise of fulfilment. In tale and picture we feel the promise that the discords, the seemingly irreconcilable conflicts, the desolating ambiguities that tear at our lives may be resolved in some great harmony.

> Thou child of man—lo, to Bethlehem
> The Kings are travelling—travel with them!
> The star of mercy, the star of grace,
> Shall lead thy heart to its resting-place.

Above the lamp-lit stable the star shines and the hosts of heaven sing songs of praise and joy. There is no fear where father and mother watch the child lying between the patient beasts. Shepherds bring greetings and even the great and wise of the earth must offer up their worldly treasures at this simple shrine of love. To find this place all our lives are a journey, and though a cold coming we may have of it, we must come and brings gifts too—mercy, pity, peace and love, none better than these. In the stable are met promise, fulfilment, peace and harmony. There the bells are ringing. Love is the Guest. O that we were there!

> Now to the Lord sing praises,
> All you within this place,
> And with true love and brotherhood
> Each other now embrace;
> For the holy time of Christmas
> Is drawing on a pace
> And its tidings of comfort and joy.

Metaphors of Faith

Robert W. Haney
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As my text I would call to your attention these words at the close of Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, a letter traditionally numbered as his second: "We cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth."

Albert Schweitzer tells us in his autobiography that these words of Paul to the Corinthians inspired and strengthened him as he set out to study the New Testament with all the critical insights at his disposal. These words might serve us in the same way, for I should like to take you on a little journey into New Testament times and, as a result of this journey, to examine with you the significance of two very familiar stories; the nativity narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. It is highly appropriate that we should be setting out upon our adventure during Advent, for while we consider the season of Advent to be, for personal piety, a time for looking forward to the event of Christmas, his-

torically it represents a looking backward at the birth of Jesus from the perspective of his death. As we shall see, this is exactly what we must do.

The journey we are about to take would not be possible in some churches. The criticisms that we must make would, in them, be called blasphemous. Yet, these criticisms must be made, and it is in accord with the spirit of our liberal churches that they *should* be made. Not afraid of questioning and doubting, our churches are firm in their belief that there *are* answers to our questions, but that these answers are not always the traditional ones. And so, as we embark upon this little journey I shall ask each of you to take the trip with an open mind and a courageous heart, with a willingness to examine your most deeply cherished traditions as vigorously and as critically as you are able. Secure in our faith in the truth, let us not be afraid of where it may lead us.

We are citizens of Jerusalem about nineteen hundred and thirty years ago. There has come into our city a man from the north—a man from Galilee. He is not wealthy; he is not a man famous for his knowledge of politics or business, or even of the fine points of the law and the prophets. We do not know very much about him. But he is a man of authority, an authority that seems to come from a power beyond him. He speaks forcefully to us. He is bold, and he is radical. Like the prophets of old, he asserts that he speaks for God, that he is warning us of God's intentions and calling upon us to prepare for the future. All of our human concerns, he says must be viewed in terms of a great act in history that God is about to bring to pass. The day of the Divine Kingdom is at hand. The power and judgment of God are to be made manifest on every side. Repent and prepare, he says, for there are among you many who will see the Kingdom coming in fire and glory.

The miraculous power of the Kingdom seems already to be at work. The blind see; the epileptic are made whole; the lame can walk. Moved by the power of the Spirit of the Kingdom, we must adhere, the Galilean tells us, more rigorously than ever before to the highest ethical ideals known to Judaism. We must break through our bondage to the petty rules of men and, in the time that yet remains, let our lives express complete, self-sacrificing love of God and obedience to His will.

The words of this man Jesus grate upon our prejudices. As sensible inhabitants of the center of Jewish history we are unwilling to believe what he says. We find it hard to understand him. But, in spite of our doubts and our confusion, we are strangely attracted to him. His words of authority are heard above our querulous voices. We begin to think that, Galilean though he may be, he is a special person. We begin to think of him as a messenger from God, as were Amos and Hosea, Jeremiah and Isaiah.

There are some people, both within Jerusalem and in the surrounding countryside, who interpret Jesus' words a little more concretely than we do. The Kingdom that he speaks of, they say, is a kingdom forged by men and women in this world. It is to be built on the rubble of revolution. Did not Jesus himself hint at this when he caused so great a commotion by ordering the money-changers out of the Temple?

Other citizens of Jerusalem are not so worried about the meaning of Jesus' words as they are about their effect upon the people. The people are being stirred up, they say. The peace and security of the city and its environs are in danger. This Jesus is a trouble-maker, as was John the Baptizer. Something must be done to silence him.

The power of this last group is greater than the power of those of us who view him as a spiritual leader or of those who think of him as the friend of revolution. The leaders of Jerusalem, and many of the people, too, decide that the threat raised by Jesus must be eliminated. Jesus himself senses that something is going to happen to him. He wavers for a time, hoping that the Kingdom will come before it is too late. It does not come, and he surrenders himself to his enemies without a word of self-defense. The peace and security of the city are restored. Commerce and daily chores, daily sorrows, and daily joys occupy the city's attention once more. The government is safe.

But there are those of us who are not contented, who do not feel safe. How shall we get along without him whom we took to be our guide? Are his enemies to triumph, or will they be destroyed, as God destroyed pharoah's armies many years ago?

Suddenly something happens. We stop feeling sorry for ourselves. Our grief and emptiness are replaced by joy and a sense of well-being. Looking back on our lives since we first met the man from Nazareth, we find that we are not the people we once were. We are new men and women. Our lives have been given new

perspectives, new dimensions. The words of Jesus, but, more important, his spirit and his hope live on in us. He is dead, yet, paradoxically, he is risen in the midst of those who believe with him and in him. We shall try for many years to find adequate ways to express this transformation of physical death at one point in the past into power here and now. Whatever formula we accept, however, we remain confronted by this ineffable mystery: a man whom we once knew has, unlike so many other people we have known, outlived his death, and stands before us now more clearly than he ever did when alive. We know him, and in that knowledge we know ourselves.

There, in Jerusalem, nineteen hundred years ago, we are all Jews. Our intellectual and spiritual lives are grounded in the rich and exciting heritage of Judaism. As we try to understand who Jesus was, we inevitably turn to Judaism for an answer. Was he John the Baptizer, risen from the dead? Was he Elijah, he who is to be the forerunner of the Messiah? Was he a prophet? Or was he the Messiah himself, the holy one of God, God's anointed?

The impact that Jesus has had upon us, the authority with which he spoke, his presence with us now even after his death lead us to think that he was no other than the Messiah, the Christ. He was even more, however, for he redefined by his own life what the Messiah would be. We had been expecting a national leader; he gave us spiritual leadership that transcended all national boundaries. The Messiah, our fathers said, will conquer in his lifetime. But we know that Jesus was defeated in his lifetime. And so, when we think of him as the Messiah, we include all those prophecies that seem in any way to point to the man whom we knew. Jesus was the Messiah; he was Immanuel, of whom Isaiah spoke; he was the suffering servant.

Strong in our faith and exhilarated by our decision that in Jesus the Old Testament was fulfilled, we begin to try to piece his life together. We want to tell others about him, and they are going to want to know a little more than that he preached repentance and was crucified. What about his birth? Where was he born? What were the circumstances? We do not know. But if he was who we think he was, then his birth must have been a great event. And so, we set about to picture the momentous occasion when the Messiah was born.

You all know the two most famous stories of Jesus' birth. If you have forgotten some of the details, the grossly lifeless Christmas crèches that are beginning to dot our landscape will remind you. Matthew tells us of the journey of the three wise men to Bethlehem, of the star that leads them, and of their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Luke writes of a census that forced Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem, of the stable where Jesus was born, of the shepherds and the angelic voices. The two stories are quite distinct—and quite different. Popular piety has obscured this fact and has merged the two together. It is only the liturgically conscious churches that preserve in the feast of Epiphany one major difference; namely, the fact that according to the gospels the wise men came to adore the infant Messiah not at the same time as the shepherds, but a few days later.

Perhaps you are not aware that the two most familiar nativity narratives are not the only ones. Others exist, telling us how it came about that Jesus was born in a cave, how he was worshipped by an ox and a donkey, how the world stood still at the hour of his birth, how the nightingale, who never before had sung a note, began to sing gloriously to celebrate Jesus' arrival, and how an angel gave to a firefly a little lantern so that he could fly out into the night to proclaim the good news. One of my favorite stories concerns the happy reminiscing of the creatures who were there in the stable and who offered their own special gifts to the Christ Child. As the story is told in an old English carol:

> "I," said the cow, all white and red,
> "I gave Him my manger for His bed,
> I gave Him my hay to pillow His head.
> I," said the cow, all white and red.
>
> "I," said the sheep with the curly horn,
> "I gave Him my wool for a blanket warm,
> He wore my coat on Christmas morn,
> I," said the sheep with the curly horn.
>
> "I," said the dove from the rafters high,
> "I cooed Him to sleep so He would not cry,
> We cooed Him to sleep, my mate and I.
> I," said the dove from the rafters high.
>
> So ev'ry beast, by some good spell,
> In the stable dark was glad to tell
> Of the gift he gave Immanuel.
> The gift he gave Immanuel.

Some of these stories were obviously designed to delight children. Others we recognize to be partial attempts to show that Jesus fulfilled this or that prophecy. They are all pleasant, heart-

warming legends, of the sort that people tell whenever they want to do homage to someone they love and admire.

Our quick journey back into Jerusalem at the time of Jesus points out, I think, that we must reach the same conclusion about the nativity stories in Matthew and Luke. For Matthew, who was anxious to show at every step in his gospel that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, the wise men and the star are the mythical answers to the prophecy found in the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah. The story that Jesus was born in Bethlehem is now commonly regarded as another myth, one designed to place him firmly in the family of David, for it was thought that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. Obviously, the first gospel, Mark, knows nothing of Jesus' birth or birthplace. For Mark and for the early church the first historical event in Jesus' life was his baptism by John. Probably the clearest example of the motivation behind Matthew's story is the anecdote of the flight to Egypt. Mary, Joseph, and their son, you may remember, hasten to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath. They soon return to Palestine, thus fulfilling, says Matthew, the words of Hosea: "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

Luke's story of Jesus' birth is simpler than Matthew's and less easy to understand. He may have been more anxious than Matthew to prove Jesus' Davidic origins. Certainly, he has to work harder in order to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. The form of census that he describes was completely unknown in the Roman Empire and would have been almost impossible to manage. It has been suggested that the adoration of the shepherds is based upon a similar story told about the birth of the Iranian god Mithra. It is more likely, however, that either David's youth as a shepherd, or an early Christian reliance upon the metaphor of Jesus the good shepherd—a metaphor that the Gospel of John uses repeatedly—is the nucleus for Luke's story.

By putting the consciousness of the early church in historical perspective we have seen that the two nativity stories seem to be myths or metaphors, descriptions of what Jesus' birth must have been like if he was the Messiah. They witness to the faith of the church that in Jesus God acted in history for the salvation of men. They are not detailed accounts of the circumstances of Jesus' birth. They are, instead, poetic theological statements describing what those circumstances should have been.

But are they nothing more? Is their value dependent upon a particular theological understanding of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth?

If we look carefully at what stories say, I think we shall find that they contain much that goes beyond theological categories, much that is valuable no matter what we may conclude about Jesus. In a word, the nativity stories of Matthew and Luke, in addition to speaking about the birth of the Messiah, seem to me to speak about the life of every man and woman. They say many things. Perhaps the most important is what they tell us about the joys and sorrows of human life. This can best be seen by remembering that the stories grew out of the whole experience of the church. While they are concerned with Jesus' birth, they must be read in terms of his death as well, and of the births and deaths of Christians in all ages. The beginning and end of his life and of ours are all of a piece.

The Christian calendar reminds us of the flux between birth and death, joy and sorrow, when it places the Feast of Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr, on December 26th, the day after the Feast of the Nativity. Stephen, firm and zealous in his faith, paid for it by being stoned to death, just as Jesus, loyal to his message, surrendered his life between two thieves. Within the gospels themselves we see this contrast most clearly in the contrast between, on the one hand, the adoration of the wise men and the words of the angels,

> Glory to God in the highest,
> and on earth peace, goodwill among men

and, on the other hand, the angry shouts of the mob when Jesus is brought before them for public condemnation, "Crucify him! . . . His blood be on us and on our children!" The birth of Jesus cannot be separated from his death. The star of Bethlehem is without meaning unless its light is intersected by the Cross. The peace and warmth of the stable are bound up with the clamor and pain on the Via Dolorosa. The straw on which Jesus lay at birth becomes the nails that pierced his hands and feet at death. A life's beginning and end coexist at every moment. The best and the worst in us and in our world are present as history and as possibility in every heartbeat. This was true for the life of Jesus. It has been true for every human being. It is true for you and for me.

We often say that it would be so very good if we could retain in our hearts and in our relations with others the spirit that we experience at Christmas, the spirit of love and affection, of good will and generosity, of joy and thanksgiving. We wish we could, but we know that we cannot. We know that in this life our joys are never pure and undefiled. No one of us is without his or her own, private grief. We cannot always look to the future with hope and eager expectancy. We sometimes find it hard to be thankful for our misfortunes. And it is so hard to be kind to those we dislike or of whose ideas we disapprove.

This last problem is perhaps the most difficult of all to deal with. The love and joy of Christmas, those qualities that shine through the nativity stories with every word, meet their boldest enemies when they confront unkindness and hatred. We have made great progress in manipulating material things. We have made very little in handling these two evils. The cries of the angry mob in Jerusalem against a man whom they once respected were repeated in Leopoldville in 1960 against another man who once was the idol of his people. We saw those outbursts of hatred repeated in New Orleans as a Catholic priest and a Methodist minister tried to take a little girl to school. The Jews stoned Stephen. Maybe we have progressed a little, for down in New Orleans a year ago the people only stoned a minister's dog. But I do not think that we can call this moral progress. It is only a lower form of moral cowardice.

Let me give you one more example, one that will be less familiar to you. At the height of the turmoil arising from the desegregation of the schools in one of the South's leading cities a little Negro girl tried to follow some of her classmates into school one morning. She was quickly surrounded by a mob of several hundred people, who walked up the path to school with her, shouting every hostile epithet that their vocabularies possessed. She stopped short of the front door turned around, and, trying to brush away the tears that were streaming down her face, stumbled to the nearest bus stop. The mob followed, still harassing her. By the time she reached the corner the little girl had broken down completely. (She still has not totally recovered.) Only one person from that crowd of several hundred came forward to help her; a woman who was a member of the Communist Party. Some of you may choose to suspect the woman's motives, but what is more important is the fact that not one Christian in that mob offered assistance.

These are merely three contemporary examples. There are many others. If you and I were given the opportunity we could probably create some terrifying examples ourselves.

We all want joy and happiness, we all love the Christmas spirit, but we are all willing to hate and to allow hatred to express itself in violence. And so, our joys are brief. They are bounded, on the one hand, by the inevitable sorrows of life and, on the other, by the evil that we let into our hearts. The gospel writers knew this as surely as we try to forget it. They knew it all the more deeply because they knew of Jesus' death before they knew of his birth. But they knew something more, too. They knew that the hatreds of men are man's creations and will, in the end, judge him. They also knew that the joys of men— those joys that come as a man sets his eyes on what is eternally good and true—have as supports the strength of man and of God. At Golgotha only man rejoices in the three crosses. The universe weeps. At Bethlehem Joseph and Mary, the shepherds and the kings are glad and thankful for the birth of Jesus. And the heavens themselves join in the celebration.

Let us pray. O Lord our God, let the spirit of this holy season fill our hearts. Let our hope and joy and love be heightened by the sobering knowledge of the threat of those forces that would destroy them. May the spirit of the season be deepened by an understanding of our lives that both sees all men as children of Thee, and hence brothers, and that also sees all men as wilful children of the world, and hence again brothers. Strengthen us in our times of need, that our sorrows may be overcome and our hatreds vanquished. Grant that by thy grace we may be bound to thee and to thy invincible spirit. Amen.

EDITORIAL (cont'd)

quility." What is the premise that we shall choose for the rooting of our lives? We cannot do better than to take the premise St. John proposed. There is shining in the darkness a light that will not be extinguished. We, too, can kindle our lesser candles from that One who is the Light of the World and, in the doing, share in dispelling the darkness because we have increased the light.

C.C.F.

The Unitarians and Music

Paul J. Rich, III
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Putting this paper together on music and the Unitarians took more time than I thought and it recalled the story about the man who went to a tailor and asked the tailor to make a new sport coat for him. "I'll make a new coat for you," the tailor replied, "but it won't be ready for a month." "A whole month," protested the customer. "Why, the Lord Himself created the entire world in only six days." "That's true," said the tailor. "And have you taken a good look at the world lately?"

Religion has enjoyed a friendship with the arts through three thousand years. Architecture's proudest moments are in sheltering religion. The great painters willingly yolked themselves to religious themes. Even the agnostic poet would be hard pressed to deny the supremacy of Dante and Milton.

The genuiness of the arts has been contributed by religion, even if at times it has been an informal and nonstructured religion. Religion without the arts is poor but art without religion is bankrupt. There is no such thing as art for art's sake. Successful art says something and has purpose. This is our ground for appraising paintings and plays and poetry. The religious person is an aesthetic and the aesthetic person is religious.

Of all the arts, the most religious and most intellectual is music. It most closely touches the divine. Music is the most abstract of the arts but also the most truthful. Music moves man as no other of the arts can. Music nears religion.

The high state in which music is held by religion is shown by the fact that music participates in the religious service. There is none other than a passive role in most cases for architecture, oils, and sculpture in religion—any but a passive role would usually be resented. Some musicians too see their role in religion as passive and the ministers regrettably resent at times an anthem or chorale that in its excellence steals the glory of the day from the pulpit. However, music directors of churches are often called ministers of music, and whether we like that title or not there is no denying the feeling it indicates about music's extraordinary role.

Determining the exact nature of this role is exasperating. Allegedly music without accompanying words has no significance *apart* for itself. So its place in the religious service under such a confined interpretation of musical significance would seem to be rather isolated and peculiar. This interpretation of music all in itself sets music adrift completely from the objective world. Music then cannot describe spinning wheels and hills and nations.

I most emphatically disagree.

Music does have the power to tell stories, to laugh and to cry and to describe and to mirror. To say otherwise is to hold that music of all things is silent.

A distinction must be made, particularly in the churches, between music and the words that are often shackled to it. My favorite example of an unlikely association of words with music is the hymn that is such a favorite on Good Friday, "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." Probably a Trinitarian would immediately associate the tune with his religious convictions, and would be offended if a popular song were set to it. Yet the tune is not religious. It is actually an old German drinking song entitled, "My Peace of Mind Is Shattered by the Charms of a Tender Maiden."

That doesn't upset me but I have told some of my orthodox acquaintances and I am afraid that for them "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" will never be quite the same. Some of the best words in the world are linked with the most awful music, and some of the finest music in the world has been branded with hymn verses that lack both good theology and good rhyme.

This illustrates the danger of believing that because the words accompanying the music are religious that the music is religious, or that because a music publisher puts out scores with crosses in the cover design that the music is automatically Christian music. The evangelical hymn "Wondrous Love" is set to the risqué ballad tune "Captain Kidd," and one wonders how many of the faithful know that. There has been too much blind acceptance of religious music just because it is billed as religious music.

A sensible criterion for determining what music is right for the churches is whether the music contributes to the total religious experience, or does it fail by just being a performed interlude? Of secondary importance is the origin or the composer, though these facts remain interesting and cannot be left out of an evaluation. If "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" was religiously valid either in its words or the actual music, the origins would not be that troublesome. It never has moved me religiously, so I am gratified that its source confirms my high suspicions.

Simply stated, the best music is the music that belongs in the churches—and the best music means that music that meets the same criteria which we apply to secular music. If God is perfection, then He certainly deserves good music in His churches.

Modern critics have been vociferous in expressing prejudices against various kinds of music in the churches for the wrong reasons. The criticism is leveled at the type of music rather than the quality, at least in the literature that I have seen. This is not new, for music has in the past got itself involved in religious controversy through the unwitting use of the wrong forms of music. In England during the sixteenth century, the use of counterpoint was identified with Catholicism and the use of harmony was identified with Protestantism. Counterpoint was considered Popish and priestly. Harmony was the music of the common people, simple and without the frills of Rome.

This sounds absurd, but was a dying matter on the scaffold for musicians of that troubled bloodied era. Men were incarcerated and lanquished in prison because of their music, suspected of treachery because of Popish counterpoint or heretical harmony.

Present exclusion of certain kinds of music from the church is as absurd as the Elizabethan view of counterpoint and harmony. Each contemporary composition calls for acceptance on its own merits, and every part of the musical heritage has a place in our free churches.

An example of this is the folk song. In most services there is no place for folk music in any of its varieties. Yet I have actually heard folk music in two sophisticated metropolitan Unitarian churches where it was in complete good taste. In the Christmas service of one church, a solitary singer hidden in the choir loft gave some folk songs from the Deep South that at that precise moment were all appropriate, all fulfilling in a meaningful way.

As a matter of scholarship, most popular music prior to the seventeenth century was religious music and about 30% to 50% of American folk music has a religious theme. Folk religious music is still being created in areas where people have not yet been trained to be the passive observers in religion rather than the participants.

Folk music is living religion to the Bible Belt evangelistic cults. To be sure, it is a primitive religion. The gospel singing is a part of a world that we will have only in our imaginations. The great river Jordan, the harps of Gold, the band of a million angels, and the saving Lord Christ whose blood washes the world. . . . The husky fervent voices of the leaders exert the congregation to really sing, and they do. They sing and they clap their hands; they sway and they snap their fingers, and to them seems to come the legendary gift of tongues. They are possessed. They act as if they had snatched the fire of the gods. That is the old time religion, proclaiming that "If it was good enough for little David, it is good enough for me."

Such music and such ecstasy is barred to us as honest participants. We can enjoy it is observers, but we are not makers of such music. There is a certain nostalgia in the intellectual liberal's passion for collecting folk songs, for the vast record libraries the Harvardians and others assemble of prison songs and tent meetings and incredible hymns. Perhaps it shows how much we wish for the simple old faith, and how much we want to believe.

In our more sober moments, though, we know better (or is it worse) of this world. History will smite us if we turn around and try to hide behind it. With one brilliant formula Einstein imposed upon us the concept of time, and we cannot put time by. This is not the age of the atom or of the beatniks. This is the age that is having to learn what time really means. Of time though, more later.

So our music shall be as much of now as of ago, and our chief concern is with what we are now doing in the liberal churches. We don't use well enough what we have, so perhaps it is mocking to start speculation as to what we should acquire. Too much of the music in the churches is utterly third rate.

The liberal churches which we support are producing music. This has been one of their hallmarks. It is especially true of hymnody.

The Reformation inaugurated a change in emphasis in the music of Christian liturgy. The responsibility for the music was shifted more to the congregation. The hymn came into its own.

Hymnody is still in its infancy compared to certain other kinds of music (unless the Psalms are included) but it is of particular significance to liberalism. It represents the role of the people in religion, of the laymen. It restores to the laymen a participation in the services of worship. It helps demolish the liturgical formalism that is the television set of modern religion.

John Haynes Holmes, one of the most celebrated living Unitarian ministers, has this to say about hymns, "Nothing of all that I have done, or tried to do, gives me on the whole such satisfaction as my writing of hymns. This represents a small segment of achievement, as compared with the two thousand and more sermons I have prepared and preached and published in the active period of my ministry. It measures up to no such personal level of excellence as that attained and held by outstanding expounders of the Word. As a sheer expenditure of energy aimed at high purposes, the pulpit still stands unrivaled. But the hymn has a quality of its own, rare and beautiful, which makes the composition of these sacred songs a spiritual event. I rejoice that among my hymns there are a few that have won favor and use. My chief abounding satisfaction on this score attaches itself to my hymn *The Voice of God Is Calling.*" (John Haynes Holmes, Collected Hymns, pp. 3-4.)

One of the latest in a procession of Unitarian hymnists that stretches well back into the 1700's, Holmes expresses a view that others have emphatically shared. John Quincy Adams was heard to remark that nothing gave him as much pleasure in life (even election to the Presidency) as hearing some of his hymns used in the First Parish (Unitarian) of Quincy, Massachusetts. While a member of that church he composed numerous hymns, a few of which are still used.

Two prime leaders in the development of hymnody in America were Jeremy Belknap and James Freeman, both Unitarians. Belknap was William Ellery Channing's immediate predecessor at the Arlington Street Church in Boston, then called the Federal Street Church. In 1795 he printed a book called *Sacred Poetry.* Consisting both of psalms and hymns, it was widely used for the next forty years by several denominations. In 1799, Freeman brought out a book entitled "A Collection of Psalms and Hymns" that was used by his own church (King's Chapel, Boston). Not the match of Belknap's work, it does show that Unitarians early began to write and publish liberal hymnals.

During the nineteenth century the Unitarians pioneered with hymnals and hymns by the dozens. They are still doing it, for as you may know a new hymnal is being readied for the Unitarian Universalist Association by a commission that has been working on the project for several years. I should mention *Songs of Faith in Man* which the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles published recently. That is certainly a feat—one lone church bringing out and widely distributing its own hymnal.

While many Unitarians could be mentioned and perhaps discussed at length as far as their contribution to hymn writing and to liturgy in general, by far the two most important Unitarian hymnists of the nineteenth century were Samuel Longfellow and Samuel Johnson. A strong contender would be James Freeman Clarke, minister of the Church of the Disciples in Boston, who achieved a permanent place in musical history with *The Disciples Hymn Book,* in which for the first time in America appeared Sarah Flower Adams' "Nearer My God to Thee."

Longfellow was the younger brother of the poet and an ordained Unitarian minister. Johnson was the author of *Oriental Religions,* first competent American student in that field, and the minister of the Unitarian church in Lynn, Massachusetts. Longfellow wrote so many good hymns that it is impossible to mention them with fairness to the ones that would necessarily be unmentioned. Two give an idea, for they are familiar to Christians of all persuasions:

Light of ages and of nations
Every race and every time
Hath received thine inspirations,
Glimpses of thy truth sublime.

And the other:

One holy Church of God appears,
In every age and race,
Unwasted by the lapse of years,
Unchanged by changing pace.

Johnson's greatest hymn perhaps is

Light of Ages, richly poured,
Love of God, unspent and free,
Flowing in the prophet's word,
And the people's liberty.

This list of hymnists would stretch on and on, including such famous Unitarian names as Oliver

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Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow would join his brother by virtue of his Christmas hymn, "I heard the bells on Christmas day. . . ." These masters of a peculiar discipline, some of whom wrote both lyrics and score, have immeasurably enriched the whole religious world.

A quick survey of Unitarianism today shows a vitality that seems to match that of the past—at King's Chapel, Daniel Pinkham directs a music program which will shame other churches to doing better. The First Unitarian Church of Cleveland has embarked on an awesome program. Robert Shaw is retained as minister of music and staff include a string quartet, vocal ensembles, choir of forty voices, and a nationally known list of soloists. The Religious Arts Guild is a national Unitarian organization which maintains a music library and is commissioning new works.

In this church we face the most important things. We meet death, existence, and other unanswered interrogations. We do not claim to answer all the questions that we ask, but we know that they are the questions that matter most. To ask them we call upon the arts, particularly music, and in turn we can help shape the themes that plea for release via brush and woodwind.

I.A.R.F. NOTICE

We have been informed that the President of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom I.A.R.F., Dr. H. Faber, Netherlands, in this capacity will attend the 3rd Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi as an observer.

A number of member groups of the I.A.R.F. which are members of the W.C.C. or have relations with it, have urged that this opportunity to be represented by an observer should be taken. Several special contributions from the circle of the I.A.R.F. have helped to finance this trip.

At the Congress of the I.A.R.F., held in Davos, Switzerland, in August 1961, the following Resolution was carried:

> "The General Assembly of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom, meeting in Davos, August 11th, 1961, and including in its membership churches and groups who are members of the World Council of Churches and others who are not, on account of objections against the present formulation of its basis of membership, places on record its considered regret that the proposed further change in the basis of membership will create problems for a still greater number of churches and groups who would otherwise wholeheartedly support the work of the Council. The Assembly deplores this action of the W.C.C. which retards the advancement of religious cooperation throughout the world."

Official word has been received by the Secretariat of the I.A.R.F. that this Resolution will be added to the documents of the W.C.C. Committee concerned.

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